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The Anti-Religious Drive Intensified

When the Church hierarchy refused to be drawn to the "party line," Russian tactics once more underwent a change and returned to the policy of outright oppression.

Half of the surviving bishops of Lithuania were arrested: Bishop Borisevičius of Telšiai, his Suffragan Bishop Ramanauskas, and Bishop Theophilius Matulionis of Kaišiadorys. The latter suffered his second martyrdom at the hands of the Russians: previously he had spent 12 years in Russian dungeons and slave labor camps until, in 1933, he was exchanged for a Soviet spy sentenced in Lithuania for subversive activities.

There are two versions regarding the fate of Bishop Borisevičius. Officially, he was sentenced to death. However, repatriated German prisoners of war state that they saw the bishop in a slave labor gang cutting timber in the Far East, together with several other Lithuanian Monsignori and priests.

The aged bishop of Vilkaviškis, Antanas Karosas, is now living in Marijampolė, retired from active duties. Archbishop Karevičius died soon after the second Russian invasion. Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski of Vilnius was repatriated to Poland to administer the sections of the Vilnius Archbishopric left in a reduced Poland. Archbishop Skvireckas, Metropolitan of Lithuania, together with Bishop Brizgys of Kaunas and Co-Adjutor Bishop Podoľskis of Vilkaviškis, are in exile in Western Europe. Bishop Mečys Reinys of Vilnius, according to a *Tass* bulletin, is said to be alive in Vilnius. There is no information whatsoever regarding Bishop Paltarokas of Panevėzys. Mgr. Juodaitis is administering the Bishopric of Telšiai.

If Bishop Paltarokas is still living, only two bishops remain in Lithuania—20% of the pre-war hierarchy. Of course, this does not prevent *Tass* from claiming that "The Catholic Church organization has remained unchanged. . . ."

During the latter part of 1946, the Soviet press vilely attacked the Catholic Church and the clergy. Lithuanian priests were accused of supporting the guerrillas—"political bandits" and "Lithuanian-German nationalists." The NKVD instituted numerous prosecution processes against priests and gave the widest publicity to the charges. Priests were sentenced to 10 years in hard labor prisons and deported to Russia.

The terror, by the end of the year 1946, was greater than during the first occupation: 25 priests were murdered, 40 were sentenced to hard labor and deported, 150 priests are in hiding.

Through murders, imprisonment, deportations and exile, Lithuania has lost the services of at least 350 priests—that is, 22% of all priests in the country in 1940.

Bishop Ramanauskas of Telšiai went to the NKVD in Vilnius to inquire about the fate of his superior, Bishop Borisevičius. He was told that the Bishop was sentenced to death. He returned to Telšiai. He was arrested by the NKVD immediately after hold-

793 ing Holy Mass. With his hands tied behind his back, he was pushed into an auto, driven to the railroad 651 station, and placed on board a train.

798 Bishop Matulionis was arrested in mid-December 1946. The old martyr bore himself with dignity and firmness. To warnings by well-wishers he replied: "I know the bolsheviks." He had ordained some divinity graduates December 9 and 12th, and appeared very weak. He was arrested a few days later for having issued a pastoral letter warning against the wiles of Komsomol.

Arrests of the clergy are more numerous after several visits to "Prime Minister" Gedvila to protest against limiting the number of divinity students to 150. The seminary's building is being requisitioned: its quarters in Marian Fathers' Charity Church are being turned over to Nurses School.

A favorite Russian method is to promote dissension. When Rev. Nagulevičius, pastor of Obeliai, was arrested, the NKBV lodged a suspended priest in the rectory. This "pastor" refused to admit the priest appointed by the bishop. The Chancellor of the diocese arrived to settle the matter, but the NKVD "pastor" refused to obey. When the Chancellor visited comrade Gailevičius, Adviser on Cult Affairs in Vilnius, the latter said: "At present the people rule. This is apparently the people's will, and we cannot help in this matter."

The NKVD is attempting to install its own "priests" and, eventually, to have a Church administration subservient to the NKVD. Thus far, only one apostate is known.

No priests are admitted to the Klaipėda-Memel District.

[794] Congregations are being evicted from their quarters although, officially, the monasteries are not banned. St. Casimir's Sisters are still in possession at Pažaislis, and the Franciscan Fathers are still left in Kretinga.

[651] Priests and Church property are heavily taxed. For instance, the Cathedral of Kaunas must pay 46,000 rubles, the Cathedral of Panevėžys 40,000, the small Church of St. Nicholas in Vilnius dating back to the 14th century, is taxed 16,000 rubles. The late Mgr. Jokubauskas, administrator of the Bishopric of Kaunas who died in February 1947, was taxed 20,000 rubles. The figures become significant when it is realized that an average laborer earns 200 rubles a month.

Sidelights of Anti-Religious Drive

659 Religious practice is permitted inside the church
626 only: Stalin's constitution grants "freedom of belief"
798 and warrants the liberty of anti-religious propaganda. No religious texts, not even prayerbooks, are permitted to be published—"paper shortage" . . . On the other hand millions of vile pamphlets are printed.

Once more, uniformed sentinels and agents in mufti are ostentatiously posted at church doors. They look

[558] over every face and scribble notes in the "blocnotes." Attendance in church means dismissal from a responsible post in the government. Teachers attending religious services are denounced in the press as "persons of low morality." A high school director inquired of

[423] tens and personal property owned by institutions and organizations of a religious character were sequestered. In nationalizing land, parishes were given only 5 hectares—although other landlords retained 30 hectares. Buildings owned by parishes and bishoprics, including episcopal residences and seminaries, libraries, printing shops, printed stocks of books were confiscated. Denominational grammar schools, high schools, orphanages, kindergartens and hospitals were converted into state institutions. The stocks of missals, hymnals, prayer-books, rosaries, religious pictures, and other religious articles found stored in book shops and retail stores were desecrated or destroyed.

The Soviets considered the clergy a separate "caste," antagonistic to the proletariat and, therefore, to be eliminated. The clergy as well as independent farmers (called '*kulaks*'), were oppressed economically; priests and "cult servants" were heavily taxed. For instance, a tolerated "proletarian" with a monthly income of 200 rubles paid 30 rubles monthly for living space assigned to him, while "cult servants" of the same income class paid 220 rubles monthly, and those with incomes of 350 rubles paid 388 rubles.

The Communist Party proposed to levy excessive license fees on churches, similar to motion picture house and cabaret assessments. The taxes depended on the size of the church. Such taxes were already imposed in the sections of Poland annexed to Russia—20,000 to 50,000 rubles. A commissar explained the policy to a pastor of a Lithuanian parish in eastern Lithuania which was annexed by Russia in 1939: "If you can't pay—close down your shop." Consequently, the churches were to be closed by degrees for nonpayment of taxes.

The Party also passed a decision to convert the centrally located Garrison Church of Kaunas into a "Revolutionary Museum." The Museum of Church Art was liquidated and its exhibits, the antique vestments, were used by Red Army troopers to polish their boots.

All that was public anti-religious action. The other phase, shrouded in secrecy, was directed against individual members of the clergy.

The Party instructed its agents to disrupt the internal discipline of churchmen, to enlist agent-informers among the clergymen, to antagonize priests against each other or to compromise them. NKGB Major Gladkov issued a secret directive dated 21 October 1940, directed to all county security chiefs, to institute unbroken surveillance of priests, church employees, friars and nuns, and to enlist students of upper classes for espionage on the private lives of the clergymen. "Remember that some of the priests are not provided for materially and are wavering in their ideological outlook." The secret order of 21 January 1941 directed particular attention to individual discontent and antagonism among members of religious organizations: advantage should be taken of such incidents to disrupt the organizations.

After digesting the reports of weakness exhibited by some individual priests, People's Commissar of Justice, Pranas Pakarklis, a native traitor, offered attractive offices to a number of priests, on condition that

793 659 661 they discontinue holding Mass and stop the performance of other priestly duties. A number of priests were arrested and the NKVD attempted to enlist their services by threats and blackmail. Because of these methods, several priests consented—and, immediately after their release, fled abroad. Those refusing to become agents were imprisoned. Soon the number of prisoners grew as many friars, preachers and high school students heroically defended their faith.

626 527 461 The Russians initiated a campaign against religious *traditions*. They began by banning the traditional Corpus Christi processions in the streets. All Saints Day was declared to be a working day, and the authorities banned traditional services and mass visits to cemeteries on All Souls' Day. During Advent and Lent, the bolsheviks encouraged dancing, entertainment and anti-religious lectures. Good Friday and Holy Saturday, as well as the second day of Easter, were designated working days. Those failing to report for work on the second day of Easter were prosecuted. In general, at frequent intervals, ordinary Sundays were periodically declared to be working days, and Saturdays—days of rest.

876 626 The teaching of religion in schools was replaced by classes on biology and the Stalin constitution. Biological lectures popularized "Darwinism." The "science of constitution" was to popularize a "Soviet democracy" and its oft-varying shifts directed by party line. In place of religious sodalities and athletic groups, the bolsheviks attempted to form *"Komsomol"* (Communist Youth) nests directed by political instructors called "Komsorg." Religious sermons were replaced by anti-religious tirades in the communist-controlled press and at mass meetings. Attendance at such mass-meetings to hear blasphemies was made compulsory.

[883]

626 661 558 Churches kept open and functioning. However, attendants at religious services were terrorized. The Party posted uniformed and non-uniformed spies at church doors to observe and list the churchgoers. Attendance in church was a sufficient reason for dismissal from higher offices.

000 The anti-religious drive, growing in tempo, began to expand. When Bishops Brizgys and Ramanauskas called on Pozdniakov, the former Soviet Minister to Lithuania and at present the Kremlin's deputy satrap, to ask for the return of the premises of the Theological Seminary, the Russian attempted to "reason" with them. Pozdniakov stated that they should have no illusions: what had been accomplished in Russia in 20 years, will be achieved in Lithuania within two to three years by experienced administrators. Why should the Seminary "delude" young men? By the time they became priests, there would be no duties to perform—in Russia the priests already have nothing to do. . . .

Lithuanian Resistance to the Anti-Religious Drive

798 771 The Lithuanians had suffered much for religion—murder, imprisonment and exile to Siberia—during

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adherents primarily among the high and low nobility. In the press of the Reformed in Kedainiai, a whole series of writings of an edifying nature were published. The Reformed, who stood primarily under the protection of Prince Radvila (Radziwill), even planned the publication of a Lithuanian Bible, which was to have been printed in Edinburgh. The undertaking had to be given up, however, because of lack of money.

The counter movement, which was supported by Prince Giedraitis (Giedroc), proceeded from Samogitia. It is also of importance for the national tide of that period in Lithuania, which first prepared the way for a native literature. Although the Union of Ljublin, in 1569, brought about the political unification of Lithuania with Poland, Lithuania retained, within the framework of the whole, her autonomy in the areas of internal administration, the army, courts, and finances. When Prince Giedraitis became Bishop of Samogitia in 1576, he took up with all his strength the attack against the reformed church, summoned the Jesuits from Riga into the country, and sought /197/ to spread Christianity through Lithuanian sermons. Large areas of Lithuania had at that time fallen back into paganism, and on the sacred mountain of Patrija even the sacred fire was rekindled. For the education of Catholic priests Prince Giedraitis founded, in 1579, the Academy of Vilna. The Catholic literature which now came into being was also promoted by the bishop. If the Protestants had been the first to publish their polemics no longer in Latin but, along with Polish, also in Lithuanian, the Catholic party now followed their example. In 1595 appeared in Vilna the catechism of the Samogitian Canon Daukša, who came from a noble family, and four years later followed his postil. If Prince Giedraitis can be considered the most active representative of that movement in the Lithuanian high nobility which fought energetically against the assimilation of

538 we see him as a young vicar in the company of other clergymen, who are all drawn with sharp strokes. There is the priest Platūnas, who lives only for his husbandry; Stripaitis, who is completely immersed in the Lithuanian cooperative movement; the idealist Ramutis; and many others. But Vasaris begins to feel ever more strongly that he lacks the calling for his profession. He fashions his life more freely, his thinking changes above all through his love for the wife of Baron Rainakis, the patron lord of his church. Then the World War overtakes him. He sets out for St. Petersburg to study at the Clerical Academy there. Once more he turns around in his wagon toward the village. He hears a thundering crash and sees the tower of his church fall, blown up by the Russians at the approach of the German troops.

It was like a blow that Vasaris felt in his breast. The tower to which the duties of the priesthood, care, and sorrow had bound him was in ruins. It seemed to him that not only the tower had fallen apart, but that with it fell apart many beautiful dreams and ideals of his youth, which had once led him to this place.

In the last part of the novel Vasaris returns to his homeland in the year 1924. Completely alienated from his profession, he lives for his artistic work.

/285/ According to the author's own confession, two problems made him write this novel--the relation of the priesthood to artistic work and the problem of the ex-priest who turns to a secular activity. It should be remembered in this connection that according to Russian law no Lithuanian could occupy an official position in his home province, which left only the few free professions, and the priesthood for advancement from the peasant class. Thus the majority of the creative intelligentsia of the country was found among the priests to the time of

538 the first World War. As a consequence, even after
793 the founding of the state the Lithuanian clergy
[365] played a decisive role in many high state offices. From this results the extraordinary significance of this class at that time and also the breadth of the artistic theme, measured by Lithuanian standards, which Putinas treats in his novel. Concerning the Lithuanian clergyman the author writes in his preface:

> "The Lithuanian clergyman was both farmer and member of a cooperative, financier, politician, diplomat, minister, physican, and--God knows what else. He agitated at public meetings--even today he takes part in the internal deliberations of the political parties. The Lithuanian clergyman was a literary man as well--sometimes a story teller, but more frequently a poet . . .The Lithuanian clergyman, very often forced into the seminary, sometimes also enrolled out of a misunderstanding, attracted by foreign ideals, gathered within himself the most varied gifts and talents . . . And again and again one or another gifted Lithuanian priest feels the necessity to give up the priesthood . . . Here lies a whole series of sociological, religious, and psychological problems."

538 It is only understandable that the appearance of such a realistic and at the same time artistically fashioned work would lead to lively controversies (16) which /286/ concerned less the

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16. Cf. for example Grinius, "Putino Altoriu šešelyj" (Putinas, In the Shadow of the Altars), Židinys, 1933, Vol. XVII, pp. 46-53 (on the first two volumes). Further: K. Korsakas, Kritika (Criticism), the chapter "Kunigas Liudas Vasaris literatūr-

[415] earthenware remains completely simple in technique and form. In
291 the way of clothing the old has not been preserved. Figure 2, from
177 the 17th century, points to similarities with the Letts. In East Prussia, German influences then had their effect, and beyond the border Polish
77/ influences made themselves felt. For a long time, until well into the 19th century, remnants of the ancient religion were preserved. This religion was a knowledge of divine forces in nature, everywhere, from the sun and the stars to the plants and stones; as well as a knowledge of the unity between nature and man, of inner and lasting relations and interinfluences between them. How clearly the divine in nature was beheld is indicated by conceptions like the one that believes that actual pain is inflicted upon the deity if the bark is peeled off the trees! How clearly the unity was experienced is to be seen from the custom of of keeping trees in the farmyard, with the thriving of which the prosperity and health of the inhabitants remained connected; or from folk songs like the following:

Alas, I poor man went hence,
Cried bitter tears.
Was not the oak tree
Transformed into my father.

Gnome-like earth spirits lived in the roots of the juniper bushes--not reminiscences of tiny original inhabitants of the type familiar among the Reindeer Lapps, as has been stated, but clearsighted visions of elementary beings. Spring, summer, and autumn festivals united the people for the communal experience of the light, the sun as the spiritual center of the world and of existence; in sacred forests
● 793 they came to the gods and sacrificed to them. Yes, the chief of the
77/ Waideloten priesthood, the Kriwe, sacrificed himself after he had become old; he admonished the people to do penance, climbed upon the stake, let himself be burned and knew that he would rise up the gods in the flames. In the same sense, it was considered a particular sign of divine mercy to be struck and killed by lightning. At one time the religious knowledge and feeling was guarded by a liberally organized, but nevertheless hierarchically ordered priesthood with an elected chief priest, and these were mediated to the people in exoteric forms. Then they maintained a perpetual fire which, only in the year 1387, was ceremoniously extinguished for ever in the castle at Vilna by the duke Jagello(!). Then they made sacrifices to the sun, they prophesied

793 from a clairvoyant vision, they mediated the disclosures of the de-
771 ceased, convoked the people for gatherings, when such revelations had been received, in order to make them known, in order to arrange festivals, and in order to determine the sowing and the harvesting time. The priests were, therefore, the spiritual leaders of the people, who guided life into its everyday activities from the vantage point of their knowledge of the cosmic interconnections. They were acquainted with the influence of the moon on all births and with the return of the souls after death into its sphere: "that which has died off, which is laid as a seed kernel into the soil of another world," as Creuzer expresses it; an insight, it would appear, into the process of every re-
[796] newed life on earth. A special festival in autumn, the festival of the consecration of the goat, seems to have been an exoteric parallel to the initiation rites in the mystery cults; for on this occasion the priests recited the traditions from the history of the people and absolved the
[821] people of sin. After the harvest a god's image was every year broken and renovated; by this was expressed the experience that the spiritual forces of the cosmos turn towards and away from the earth in the rhythm of the year, and that in winter they collect themselves, renew themselves, in order to be able to come streaming to the growing plant world in the spring. Present-day harvest practices are the final dying echoes of such knowledge of the spiritual forces, vivifying and emanating, that permeate the world and all its parts.

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/33: Illustrations./